DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 122 EC 131 355

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TITLE The Yellowstone Plan: Individualized Education Program for Emotionally Handicapped Boys and Girls.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 12p.: Paper presented at a Topical Conference of The Council for Exceptional Children (Minneapolis, MN, August, 1980, Section Meeting 47).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basic Skills: Children: Daily Living Skills: Educational Diagnosis: *Educational Philosophy: Elementary Secondary Education: *Emotional Disturbances: *Individualized Education Programs: Interpersonal Competence: Mainstreaming: Program Descriptions: Residential Programs: *Residential Schools: *Self Esteem: Skill Development: Teaching Methods: Teamwork: Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Yellowstone Ranch WY

ABSTRACT

The paper presents an educational program for seriously emotionally disturbed students at the Yellowstone Ranch, a residential treatment facility and school focusing on the enhancement of each student's self esteem. Located in Wyoming, which in 1965 created a special school district to serve the needs of special needs children, the school has as its educational goals (1) to teach school survival skills and capacities so that each student can succeed in the least restrictive educational setting and (2) to teach life survival skills, attitudes, values, and capacities. During the past 2 years (1978-80) the school mainstreamed 50 students with only two placement failures. Each of the eight self contained classrooms are arranged into one of four levels along a continuum from more to less restrictive. Treatment at both the ranch and school are closely coordinated and synergistic teamwork is seen as the key to the children's success. The program provides a 30 day assessment period: an individualized curriculum with social/emotional, academic, vocational, and physical education components: a nongraded teaching strategy: data based decision making: flexibility in both scheduling and educational grouping: daily evaluation of student performance: a staff development component: an achievement motivation system: a tutor component: and an outreach component. (PHP)

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THE YELLOWSTONE PLAN

Individualized Education Programs for Emotionally Handicapped Boys and Girls

AK-12 Integrated Public School, Peer, Residential Treatment Mainstreaming Education Model at an Accredited Residential Psychiatric Facility

The Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch

"It really helps when you know someone cares" (The Ranch Motto)

Narrative Prepared
by
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EC/13/355

Paper Presented
to
Council For Exceptional Children
Topical Conference On The Seriously Emotionally Disturbed
August 13-15, 1980
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE YELLOWSTONE PLAN

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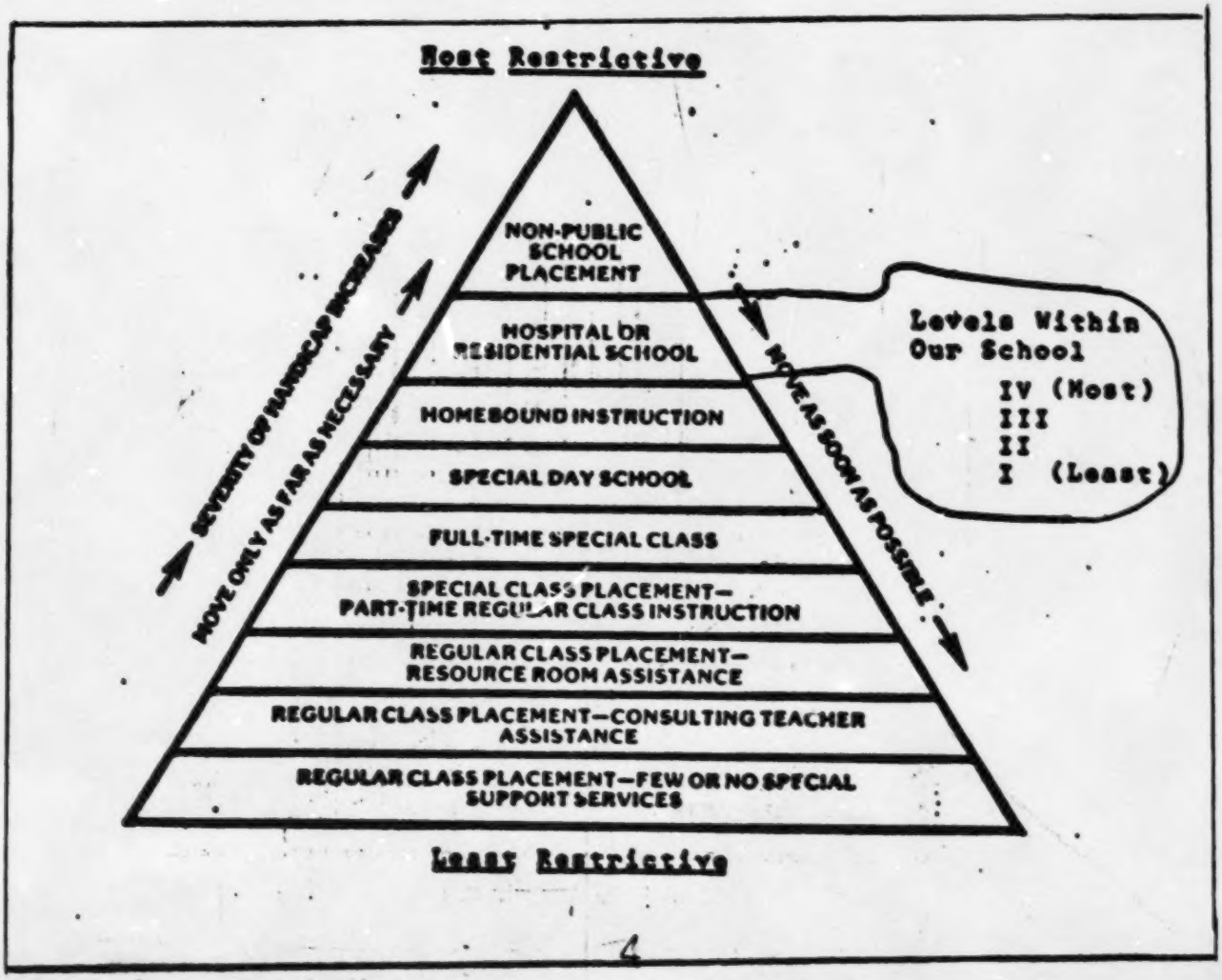
The Students: Introduction Section

What good is reading a narrative on programs for children without knowing what the students are like. This short introduction is to give the reader an understanding of School District 58's children.

The entire student population of School District No. 58 has been identified, by a Special Education Evaulation Child Study Team, as having such severe emotional impairments that a residential self-contained treatment classroom specializing in remedial emotional/behavioral problems has been determined as the most appropriate and least restrictive educational placement. As noted on the cascade in Figure 1 below of educational services, our residential school is at the top of the cascade.

FIGURE 1

Cascade of Educational Services



Our staff feels strongly that labels are all too often distancing phenomenon and are not very descriptive of an individual human person. The label "emotionally disturbed" does not tell us us much. Students come to us with very poor track records. Most of their psychological and educational needs have been unmet. They have been described as "uncontrollable", "weird", "difficult to reach", "withdrawn", "educationally crippled" and "crazy". Most students have a long history of school failure. They have not made it in the normal school environment. Many students are school expellees. A large number have a history of assaults on teachers. Without exception, they have a very low concept of themselves. For the average child, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch is his/her fourth home. One child has been in nine foster homes and adopted three times. He is 14 years old. Many of our children are headed toward a lifetime of anguish and despair. They are troubled, difficult, and failure-oriented children. They are not surviving. Intervention at Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch is the last chance for most of our children. It is our job to provide them with skills to survive life.

As the narrative below indicates, the therapeutic mileu of all the programs here at the ranch are designed to redirect each child's self perception and direct them toward a positive growth-oriented, loving healthy human person. We feel that self esteem is learned, therefore it can be taught. The entire staff is dedicated toward teaching children to become people who can negotiate life successfully.

The Ranch

Located eight miles west of Billings, Montana a city of 80,000 people, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accredidation of Hospitals (JCAH) as a psychiatric facility for emotionally disturbed children. The ranch provides a full compliment of programs to meet the unique needs of each child. Created 23 years ago, the ranch has served hundreds of children. In 1965 the Montana Legislature created a special public school district designed specifically to meet the unique special needs of our special needs children. This narrative focuses specifically on the school component of the 24 hour residential treatment program at the ranch. Synergistic teamwork is the key to the children's success here at the ranch.

The School

We feel a school needs a blueprint - a plan - a direction - a "core mission" agreed upon by the entire staff. A school must know where it is going or it will end up somewhere else. All too often schools are like rudderless ships which drift aimlessly toward segmented, disconnected, unknown ends. We design school programs to meet the identified educational goals for each child at the ranch. The school is one component of the many components of the therapeutic mileu here at the ranch. We see the results of the total mileu as the total program is greater than the sum of its separate parts.

As indicated in Figure 2 below, the school staff has clearly defined its core mission and listed it as school goals. All learning episodes are designed to meet these school goals. The blueprint of how we meet these goals is called the Yellowstone Plan. All teachers in the school are Montana certified special education teachers. They are specialists in teaching emotionally handicapped youth. The ranch knows what it is about. It knows where it is going. Because of this we've found the mileu here does have efficacy.

FIGURE 2
Educational Goals for School District #58

1. School Survival Skills: The primary goal of School District #58 is to teach school survival skills and capacities so that each student can achieve success in a less restrictive educational alternative. Inherent in this goal are the following:

   a. Self Esteem
   b. Human Relation Capacities
   c. Human Relation Skills
   d. Basic Academic Skills

2. Life Survival Skills: The secondary goal is to teach life survival skills, attitudes, values and capacities. Inherent in this goal are all Goals of Education adopted by the State of Montana, Office of Public Instruction.

Student Results

Physical movement of students, backward and forward along the continuum of educational services which are more restrictive at one end and less restrictive at the other end is considered "hard data" and is evidence of student progress. Each student is programmed from an I.E.P. and the progress toward goals and short-term objectives is noted carefully by each teacher. This data is brought to the Child Study Team Meetings. Each student is "staffed" six to eight times a year. At each meeting it is discussed whether the student is ready for a less restrictive placement. All student movements are decided upon by the Child Study Team.

Our goal is to mainstream each student. The school has averaged 70 special education students in each of the past two years. In 1978-79 we "mainstreamed" into the Billings Public Schools 29 students. Only one didn't make it. In 1979-80 21 students were placed into regular schools in less restrictive school placements. Only one came back. This "data" is indicated below in Table 1. Also indicated in the table are backward and forward movements within our school. Follow-up research done by our "Transition Teacher" indicates they are surviving.

TABLE 1
Student Movement Record

School Year	Backward Moves From Ranch	Backward Moves Within The 4 School Levels	Forward Moves Within The 4 School Levels	Forward Moves From Our School To Regular School	Return Moves From Regular School
1978-79	1	4	27	29	1
1979-80	2	5	30	21	1
2 Year Total	3	9	57	50	2

Narrative Section

THE YELLOWSTONE PLAN

The structure of the school actualizes the mainstreaming principle. In compliance with Public Law 94-142, all eight self-contained classrooms are arranged in one of four levels along a continuum from more restrictive to less restrictive. Each level has a different focus. For example, Level 4 classrooms focus on "me and self contraol", Level 3 classrooms focus on "we and communication", Level 2 classrooms focus on "we and cooperation" and Level 1 classrooms focus on "reentry into the mainstream". As indicated by the cascade of educational services the school is the most restrictive setting possible. To the right of the pyramid are indicated levels used within our school. Below in Figure 3 are the four levels.

FIGURE 3
Continuum of Educational Placements

Assessment Classroom	Level IV Self Contained Classroom	Level III Self Contained Classrooms	Level II Self Contained Classrooms	Level I a) Reentry Classroom (or) b) Vocational Classes

A coordinated treatment mileu provides a climate for growth for all children. The school works closely with lodge parents, psycotherapists, work program personnel, recreation therapists and the two psychiatrists and other ranch program personnel. Each morning teachers call the lodge parents to see how the students are doing. At the end of each day a school home note card is carried by the student back to the lodge. School and program personnel meet often to design programs at psychiatric staffings and at individual education development meetings. Weekly teachers do vocational counseling with students. Each child holds at least one job at the ranch. This work program that the child is involved in is highly regarded as a model throughout the professional community residential treatment centers. The syngistic teamwork coordinates a positive climate that has efficacy.

A ranch assessment center is located at the east part of the ranch campus. It is the entry step for each child. The school has a full-time classroom in the center for purposes of doing a comprehensive education evaluation for each child. Together the teacher and the assessment staff write a comprehensive psyco-educational evaluation report. At the end of the 30-day assessment period, the staff meets at an initial placement child study team meeting. Until that meeting the student is not a formal student of the school district. The receiving lodge parent and receiving teacher together with the assessment team write the individual education program around the current needs and levels of the students. Annual goals and short-term objectives are decided upon at this meeting. Following this initial meeting, theprogramming begins. The next few paragraphs describe briefly educational programming. At that meeting the I.E.P. is written and the receiving teacher begins to design the student's individualized instruction program which we call the I.I.P.

The curriculum in our self-contained classrooms is totally individualized and is entirely based off each student's individual education program (I.E.P.). Classroom structures vary depending on the level of classroom. Curriculum and teaching are in harmony. All too often curriculum guides spell out context and skills with little linkage to the "how tos" of teaching. Curriculum contact must be related to the teaching learning process. Each child's academic teacher is considered the case manager and is in charge of all educational programming so that the I.E.P. goals and short-term objectives are being worked on. For older students I.E.P. is coordinated with credit eligible school courses from their residential school districts.

The social emotional curriculum taught is a most complicated program. The ranch grows people. We feel self esteem is learned, therefore it can be taught. Each teacher every day writes a daily prescription for what goals will be worked on for the student. Examples of these goals are greeting other students, saying five positive things about self, accepting criticism, etc. Through a variety of integrated programs, the student's school environment enhances the development of the goals. Some of the programs to do this are daily classroom meetings, daily use of the motivation system, cross age teaching, tutor programming and daily school assemblies.

The academic curriculum focuses on reading, mathematics, language arts, social studies and life survival education. Every available strategy is used to keep each student on his instructional level. Daily academic prescriptions are written for each student. They take the same courses they would if they were in a less restrictive school placement. Students receive credit for courses toward high school graduation upon their return to their resident school districts.

The vocational curriculum is highly effective and geared toward our oldest students. Some of the specific life skills courses offered at Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch are: life survival, welding, wood shop, printing, home maintenance, painting, carpentry, foods and work study. Older students are given a special comprehensive

occupational and assessment evaluation. Each student's I.E.P. tells us what processes, skills and capacities to teach in order to help each student how to better negotiate in the real world. The entire I.E.P. is directed toward teaching the student first and the subject second. Weekly vocational counseling sessions are held by each teacher.

Physical education curriculum is an integral part of each child's programming. Both the affective and cognitive domains are not the only areas which receive a-cent in the student's educational program at Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch. Each student participates in a planned physical educational program each day. The program in physical education provides excercise designed to increase or improve physical fitness and develop skills with a carry-over value such as bowling, swimming, handball, tennis, basketball, volleyball, skiing, etc. The physical education program also includes specific individualized adaptive physical education instruction as a result of the recommendations within the I.E.P. The complete physical education facility here at the ranch includes a bowling alley, Olympic-size swimming pool, a gymnasium, a playground area, a tennis court and a baseball and football field. The recreation therapy program includes very humanisticly trained educators who are very willing to work with children at their level.

Non-graded strategies are used procedures here at the School. The philosophy allows each child to progress at his/her own rate. Progress is continual rather than an artificial steps such as eight grades at the elementary level and four grades at the secondary level. Each student proceeds as rapidly as he or she can and as slowely as he or she must. Every effort is made to keep each student on his or her instructional level and insure that he is not at the frustration level, where his assignment is too difficult, or the "free level" where his assignment is too easy. A major academic goal is to produce "self directed learners".

Data Based decision making is an integral part of each student's programming. Behavior and learning is quantified onto charts whenever appropriate. All teachers are Precision Teachers and we utilize this powerful innovative construct to facilitate daily data based decision making. As precision teachers, each teacher samples daily how each student is doing in Reading and Math. In addition pre/post testing is done with standardized instruments on self-esteem and academic achievement.

Variable scheduling for each student is provided by the team as a part of each student's "prescription for instruction". This allows a boy or girl to spend the amount of time the team feels is necessary to meet his individual needs. As a result, a child's individual activity schedule changes from day to day. The length of time devoted to a specific activity area is also adjusted to the individual child.

Multi-age groups, groups of students of various chronological ages, participate together in all classrooms. Students in Level IV and III usually hold class meetings twice a day. Each student in Level II participates in small group instruction approximately 50% of the time and receives individual instruction approximately 50% of the time. A balance is maintained to provide each student with as much interpersonal socialization education as possible and still maintain an atmosphere of progress at an individual pace.

Evaluation/accountability, ("in-process", "pre/post", and "cycle back"), for each child is a continual process. Daily assessment is utilized as one of the evaluation tools in the basic subject areas. All programs are very "data based". Through precision teaching students are evaluated in each "skill" area. Student behaviors are charted each day, either by one of the staff members or by the student, so that record of his progress will be up to date at all times. The evaluation team is composed of the teaching team, school psychologist, and principal. In the majority of instances, when an analysis of the evaluation dictates relatively minor changes in direction (prescription), the evaluation team will initiate the necessary adjustments. However, in the event of a major educational change for a student, the diagnostic team will be responsible for the development of new objectives and prescribing new methods and/or materials for instruction.

To supplement day-to-day evaluation, each student is administered standardized achievement tests and criterion referenced evaluative instruments, the interpretation of which not only assists in providing a basis for instruction, but will also measure overall program effectiveness. A research and development team collects precision teaching and self esteem data for the purposes of establishing local school norms.

Staff Development is an ongoing program. Staff needs are identified by the inservice committee via questionnaires and through discussion. Weekly "idea sharing" sessions are held after school one day each week. Precision teaching "chart sharing" occurs. Data based decision making is a constant goal. All staff development centers around the goals of the school. Inservice programs include: I.E.P. writing, individualizing, designing intervention programs, crises intervention, human relations, education, special education rules, models of teaching and positive support strategies. Staff self esteem is the backbone of the school program.

The Achievement Motivation System of the school is based from Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Each student is placed on one of three systems depending on his/her needs. For example, students working on safety and self control are on a different system than students working at a social interaction level. Teachers at the end of each school day meet with their students in individual conferences to wrap up the day. Points earned are recorded in a bankbook and a short home note card is written for the file. Students spend points in many ways. The most popular way is the twice-a-month auction. The entire school programming fits into the motivation system.

The tutor program is an integral part of the motivation system. Students try out for tutor program and if selected help teach students at levels lower than themselves. This teaching program increases the self esteem of the students.

The school outreach program induces training and inservice for other educators. A number of schools have written federal grants to be trained by our staff. The most popular inservice is the motivation system as it is the glue which holds the programming together. The school also gives inservice on; teaching self esteem, classroom meetings, crises intervention, precision teaching and I.E.P. development.

We have found the below core ingredients critical to the effective implementation of the programs in our school. These are:

1) The first element which is the most important is teachers. The teacher in a psychiatric residential setting has many extra demands. He/she must not only unite with the demands of the less restrictive regular school system and the demands of the effectively teaching within a therapuetic community but also cope with the ever demanding, draining influence of the emotionally handicapped youth. The staff at the Ranch is outstanding.

2) The second key element is an agreed upon "core mission". "If you don't know where you're going you'll end up somewhere else." The staff knows where it is going and has formulated these decisions into school goals located at the front of this narrative.

3) The third key element is staff knowledge and the ability to implement the processes and environment which move children toward that agreed upon "core mission".

THIS IS OUR PROGRAM AND PHILOSOPHY. IT IS UNIQUE. IT IS HUMANISTIC. IT IS EDUCATIONALLY SOUND. IT IS DATA BASED. IT HAS DIRECTION. IT MEETS HUMAN NEEDS. IT HAS CONTENT. IT IS PROCESS ORIENTED. IT IS A SCHOOL WITHOUT FAILURE. IT WORKS!